

Something New

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Something New

by [Hotsalsacoldchips](#)

Summary

“O-Oh, sorry.” Maiko blushed, instinctively shutting the book in her lap. “I didn’t mean to…”

The brush was back in her hands again, but it was hard to focus on her work now that she was hearing sentences she could understand. “For what?” she asked, not looking up from waves of strawberry blonde hair.

“For ranting.” Maiko toyed with her hands. “And for… sounding really lame, y’know…”

Maiko asks Ismene to braid her hair during a sleepover. While she's working, the older woman has the perfect opportunity to rant about her favorite manga... that Ismene can't wrap her head around.

Notes

SURPRISE!!!! hiatus over lads. Shaking off the rust with a quick ismaiko fic. Just wanted to explore their relationship at the beginning of ch2. Speaking which, while this does take place early ch2 in the timeline, it technically contains no spoilers, so you're free to read from the moment you start.

Enjoy :3c

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

“-and then, just as she finally beats her enemy in the duel she’s always dreamed of, she breaks down!” Maiko exclaimed, starry-eyed. “The demon prince admits she can’t bring herself to hurt her!”

Ismene couldn’t help but frown as she dragged her brush through the older woman’s hair, watching it snag on tangles for the dozenth time. She had a feeling the next try wouldn’t be her successful attempt at combing them out, nor would the next hundred, for that matter, and she considered asking Maiko just how attached she was to the length of her hair.

“All those years she hunted her, hoping to bring her kingdom justice by slaying the angel princess, and she only realizes she can’t do it when she’s finally defeated her. And the princess breaks down too, because of course she does - it’s just so sad, isn’t it?”

“Unimaginable,” Ismene deadpanned. She dropped the brush onto the bedside and was trying to use her fingers to untangle the knots herself, though she wasn’t making much progress.

“That scene’s my favorite. The way they drew the expression on the demon prince’s face as she’s holding her sword above the angel princess is so perfect!” Maiko flipped through the book in her lap, eventually landing on the page depicting the scene she described. She held it above her head for the other girl. “See? She looks like she’s in so much pain!”

Ismene’s attention was pulled away just as she managed to break the smallest tangle apart. She squinted at the manga as it came into view, leaning forward in a vain attempt at understanding what she was seeing. Two characters, one holding a weapon, both crying... one had bat wings...

“Mmm,” she replied, her hum filled with that same irritable confusion that was always present in her tone nowadays. She didn’t like manga, but she could appreciate Maiko finding a copy of a story she liked in the library. If only they had her favorite Greek tragedies... she’d be able to have her own little escapist moments, too.

“Pretty cool, right? I mean, this was only the author’s second work and they were still trying to find their style, but I don’t think that takes away from the quality,” she argued, lowering it

back into her lap. She turned a few pages, adopting a fond smile. “It was the first manga I ever read, too. At the time this was like, the coolest thing in the world for me.”

Ismene gave another noncommittal noise for a response, delicately holding onto problematic strands of Maiko’s hair just above the tangles so that it wouldn’t hurt when she tore them out.

Maybe the noise sounded off that time, though. “O-Oh, sorry.” Maiko blushed, instinctively shutting the book in her lap. “I didn’t mean to...”

The brush was back in her hands again, but it was hard to focus on her work now that she was hearing sentences she could understand. “For what?” she asked, not looking up from waves of strawberry blonde hair.

“For ranting.” Maiko toyed with her hands. “And for... sounding really lame, y’know...”

Ismene shrugged. “A lot of people sound ‘lame’ if they don’t have experience presenting their research. If you know your material, you need to project your confidence into what you’re saying so that your peers will listen.” She combed her hair again, smiling when she felt the brush glide through without issue. “Just don’t mumble. It makes you sound tired. Or disinterested.”

Maiko raised a hand to her chin. “No, I mean, like,” she tried, “I’m an adult woman who can’t stop talking about a story for preteens.”

“Aren’t those the only kinds of stories you like?”

“Yeah, that’s the problem,” she sighed. “You’d think I would’ve grown out of it by now. This is exactly what got me picked on before Yui became my friend. No wonder why. I wouldn’t wanna hang out with me, either...”

It was the mention of Yui’s name that immediately drew her full attention, an uneasy feeling prickling at her skin as it dawned on her that the conversation was drifting into hazardous

territory. She lowered the brush and raised her head to peer over Maiko's shoulder. "You think liking stories for children makes you difficult to hang out with?"

"Do you wanna talk about stories for children?" she asked, turning her head to look Ismene dead in the eyes.

She fumbled for a second, caught off-guard by the question. "Well... no, I don't. I don't have any interest in reading them, frankly."

She phrased it wrong. Maiko looked like she was about to cry.

"Though, I mean," she tried, "I don't mind listening to you talk about them. It's something you're passionate about, and you're... very well educated on the subject. Plus, if you're looking to have more lively discussions with someone who's interested in the same material, I'm sure there's plenty of people here that would be suitable."

Maiko gave an uncertain hum, still threatening to bury her face in her hands. "Are you sure I'm not bothering you? I can't even talk about stuff you like; I don't know anything about the classics... or Greece and Rome in general..."

Ismene huffed. "If I only wanted to hang out with people who could entertain me with my favorite areas of research, I wouldn't have even met eyes with anyone here." She offered a small smile as she watched hope fill Maiko's expression. "Besides, I'm the one who invited you to sleep over, aren't I? You're here with me because I asked you to be."

Maiko blushed again, glancing away with an embarrassed grin. "I guess..."

She was back to focusing on brushing her hair once more, checking the lower layers for any last-minute snags. "You know, the way you talk about your stories reminds me of how excited I was to discuss new things I noticed in my favorite plays when I was younger. I'd lose myself talking about some detail I never thought about before," she chuckled.

It was quiet for a few moments. That was what gave her the feeling that something was off. Maiko didn't like quiet, really. So, she spared a glance up. The older woman was looking down at her manga again, this time, with the slightest hint of something somber behind her eyes, though she still wore that same, soft smile.

Ismene furrowed a brow, frowning. "Did I say-"

"Oops! Wow," Maiko hurried, "totally just spaced out." That something was gone, and it was like it was never there to begin with. "A-Anyway, um, how's my hair?"

She surveyed her work. "I think it's ready to braid." Maiko wanted a crown braid. Apparently she'd never tried that style before. Ismene gave one last thoughtful glance over Maiko's shoulder. "It'll take a little while. Do you want to continue where you left off in your story? Even if I don't understand most of it, I could do with knowing how it ends."

Maiko hesitated for a moment, before ultimately breaking into a wide grin. "I do want to, actually..." She toyed with her hands again, evening her voice and trying not to mumble through her words. "And, after that... could you tell me about a story you like? Maybe we could, y'know, take turns."

Ismene's smile was back before she knew it. "Of course. Though, fair warning, no story I like is even remotely comparable to anything that interests you."

Maiko held the manga in her hands, brushing a thumb over the wear she'd already put the cover through after so many rereads in her cell. Her expression mirrored her new friend's, settling into a content gaze. "That's okay. Something new wouldn't hurt."

End Notes

real talk do you guys prefer ismaiko or maikomene or a secret third thing also if you haven't played maikos ftes do them this isnt a request you have to do them DO THEM NOW

I wanted to touch on maikos complicated relationship w her interests a bit. Just a sprinkle. Hoping to do more of her and ismene in the future bc that one scene of maiko saying ismene reminds her of yui in her ftes made me lose my mind bro

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